

## The New Yugoslavia

TITO'S PROMISED LAND: Yugoslavia. By Alex N. Dragnich. 333 pp. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. \$5.75.

By M. S. HANDLER

**P**ROFESSOR of Political Science at Vanderbilt University, Alex N. Dragnich served with the United States Information Service in Belgrade during three critical years ending in 1950. He returned to Yugoslavia in the summer of 1952, after he had left government service.

Mr. Dragnich was one of a small group of American Embassy officials who, under their counselor, Robert Borden Reams, discovered in the spring of 1948 the first evidence of a profound disagreement between the Yugoslav press in the speeches of the Yugoslav Communist leaders, the mutation of certain symbols which some Eastern European specialists associate with the demonology of Communist society. The expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist party from the Cominform, which was announced on June 28, 1948, confirmed the brilliant research of the youthful American group in Belgrade.

By training and first-hand experience Mr. Dragnich qualifies as one of the best informed American students of post-war Yugoslav affairs in the United States. In his present work, "Tito's Promised Land," he has attempted to trace the rise of the Yugoslav Communists to power, to analyze the anatomy of their regime, the impact of their policies and practices on the principal sectors of the national life, the attitude of the people to their rulers. Mr. Dragnich also examines the relations of the Yugoslav Communist regime with the West since the expulsion from the Cominform, the effect of the American economic aid programs; in the end, he indicates certain lines of probable developments.

**T**HE book is largely based on reading of the Yugoslav press and periodicals, speeches of the Yugoslav leaders, and information personally acquired during the author's residence in Yugoslavia. The author's fluent command of the Serbo-Croat language has given him an advantage over other investigators. As a result we find here a mass of interesting information that has not appeared in earlier books on post-war Yugoslav affairs. Unfortunately the presentation lacks objectivity, and the style too frequently descends to the level of polemic.

Mr. Dragnich establishes his frame of reference with a brief survey of Yugoslav history prior to World War II. Many students of Yugoslav affairs will feel that he has left too many things unsaid. He does not appear to give the Serbian-Croatian struggle the importance it deserves.

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Tito talks with townspeople in his native village of Kumrovec, Croatia.

after all, that struggle was responsible for the internal strife which disrupted the country's new-found unity and contributed to the disintegration of the Yugoslav state several weeks after the Nazi invasion.

In his account of the internecine war between the Chetniks and Tito's Partisans, Mr. Dragnich identifies himself unreservedly with the cause of Mihailovich and minimizes the military contributions of the Partisans to a point where he gives the impression that their operations were negligible. He deplores the unscrupulous methods of the Partisans in their struggle for power, but in so doing he fails to recognize that Tito and his group were waging a total war in the fullest sense. It was this total war, which Tito and his associates understood and practiced, that brought victory, because the Yugoslav Communist leadership understood the meaning of power in the twentieth century whereas Mihailovich did not. Mr. Dragnich appears to regard war and power as moral problems, when they are just the opposite.

**T**HE author describes with indignation the means Tito used to consolidate his power after the liberation of the country. Here again we are faced with the terrible dilemma of politics and morals. It is patent that a revolutionary party never loses sight of its main objective, the seizure of total power. An objectively stated examination of the measures by which a revolutionary party exterminates its opponents in the process of establishing power is a far more effective and devastating method of relating the crimes perpetrated than any amount of moral indignation.

He analyzes the anatomy of the Communist regime in Yugoslavia with a wealth of detail, but he weakens his presentation by abandoning the clinical method. As a result, he succeeds merely in telling us that a Communist state is not only inefficient but brutal in its choice of policies and means of enforcement. These conclusions are true, but too well known by now to form the basis of an entire book.

Mr. Dragnich is on sound ground when he analyzes not only the inability of the Yugoslav leaders to solve their economic problems but to halt the rate of deterioration resulting from their policies. Here again, however, his indignation dominates. The crux of the matter is to be found in the fact that at no stage have the Yugoslav Communist leaders succeeded in solving any of their major economic problems except with outside assistance. The survival of a Communist regime in point of history is bound up with this problem.

**T**HE author admits that the American policy of assisting Yugoslavia after the expulsion from the Cominform was a risk worth taking, but he puts forward two propositions that are subject to question. The first is that Yugoslavia's military importance to the West will decline as the West's defenses are built up. The second is that the morale of the Yugoslav Army is poor.

When one looks at the Western defenses, what does one see other than American and British power? The actual military power of the other Western allies is not substantially greater today than it was in the dark days of the Korean war. Until such time as all the Western allies are prepared to make a real defense contribution, the Yugoslav army must be regarded as a necessary element of strength on one of the West's important flanks.

To challenge the morale of the Yugoslav Army to deal in speculation. Nobody can predict in advance of combat how any army will perform. So far as is known, not an important high-ranking American officer who has visited Yugoslavia has doubted the morale of the Yugoslav Army.

At one point Mr. Dragnich admits that the Yugoslav Communist regime has become stronger despite its numerous errors, its costly experiments and the injustices it has committed. This may or may not be true. We shall only learn how strong or how weak the Yugoslav regime is the day the chips are down not only for Yugoslavia but for all of Europe.

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